



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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CANADA, MEXICO, AND U.S. SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS AND WETLANDS

For the first time, agencies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States have signed a three-nation memorandum of understanding to improve conservation of migratory birds and the wetland habitats essential to their survival, Frank Dunkle, director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

The memorandum of understanding was signed March 16 by Dunkle and the directors of the national wildlife conservation agencies of Canada and Mexico: Anthony Clarke, director general of the Canadian Wildlife Service; and Graciela de la Garza Garcia, director general for the Direction General of Ecological Conservation of Natural Resources of the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology of the United States of Mexico.

"This memorandum of understanding will improve conservation of waterfowl that winter in Mexico and aid in protection of the wetlands that support these birds and many other kinds of fish and wildlife," Dunkle said. "It also will assist Mexico in meeting its conservation needs. From our view, this will contribute to achievement of the international goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, although Mexico has not become a party to that plan," he said.

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The North American Plan is an agreement between Canada and the United States signed in 1986. Its goals are to preserve key waterfowl habitats in both countries and to restore waterfowl populations, particularly ducks. Ducks have suffered significant declines during the 1980's, largely because of prolonged drought in northern nesting areas and continued destruction of wetland habitats throughout the continent.

The memorandum of understanding between the wildlife agencies of Mexico, the United States, and Canada provides for immediate action. It calls for Mexico to present in 1 month to the United States and Canada a list of wetlands and wintering sites for migratory birds that Mexico considers priority areas for trilateral cooperation. This document also will suggest projects to be developed and identify needs for their implementation.

The Canadian and United States wildlife agencies will respond within 45 days after receiving the Mexican proposal with information concerning technical assistance or other support they may be able to offer.

The agencies also have agreed to establish by mid-April a three-nation committee to develop conservation strategies for migratory birds and their habitats. This effort may lead to a coordinated migratory bird management plan for the three countries.

Agencies of the three nations also agreed to exchange information on wetlands and wintering sites of migratory birds, to facilitate the entry into the respective countries by personnel involved in implementing the agreement, and to respect each nation's legal jurisdictions and policies regarding conservation.

The United States has had bilateral treaties for migratory bird conservation with Canada since 1916, and with Mexico since 1936. This memorandum of understanding represents the first time wildlife agencies of the three nations have agreed upon trilateral cooperation toward conservation of North American migratory birds. Many waterfowl nest in Canada, rest and feed in the United States during migration, and winter in Mexico.